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Northeast African racers of the *Platyceps rhodorachis* complex (Reptilia: Squamata: Colubrinae)

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Northeast African racers of the *Platyceps rhodorachis* complex (Reptilia: Squamata: Colubrinae). - Racers from Eritrea and the Dahlak archipelago to central Somalia usually referred to *Platyceps rhodorachis subniger* (Boettger, 1893) are remarkable for the homogeneity of their scale features (e.g., preocular, anterior subocular, supralabials, ventrals, subcaudals, and dorsal scale rows). This taxon is morphologically closest to southern Arabian populations of Jan's cliff racer, *P. rhodorachis* auct.

Keywords: *Platyceps rhodorachis subniger* - *P. rhodorachis* auct. - *P. rhodorachis* group - morphology - distribution.

INTRODUCTION

Since Parker's (1949) revalidation of *Platyceps rhodorachis subniger* (Boettger, 1893a) within the hotchpotch racer genus *Coluber* auct., this taxon was understood to include NE African populations of *P. rhodorachis* (Jan, 1863). But Jan's cliff racer, long thought to be distributed from the central Sahara (Ahaggar Mountains) and the Horn of Africa to the Indian subcontinent, may not occur west of the Euphrates and adjacent areas of the Arabian Peninsula.

Platyceps rhodorachis auct. is a systematic complex including, for instance, *P. afarensis* Schätti & Ineich, 2004 from Djibouti and *P. saharicus* Schätti & McCarthy, 2004. The latter encroaches upon the northwestern corner of the Arabian Peninsula and is sympatric with a yet unassigned taxon ("*Platyceps* sp.") from Jordan to southern Arabia that may belong to Jan's cliff racer.

This study, a further step towards a systematic revision of Afro-Arabian racers of the *Platyceps rhodorachis* group, investigates morphological features (pholidosis, dorsal colour pattern, dentition, hemipenis) of populations from Eritrea to central Somalia usually assigned to Jan's cliff racer.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Sixty-five specimens from virtually the whole distribution range were analyzed. They are deposited in The Natural History Museum (formerly British Museum [Natural History]), London (BMNH), the Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago (FMNH), Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris (MNHN), Museo Civico di

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Storia Naturale, Genova (MSNG), Museo Civico di Storia Naturale, Milano (MSNM), Museo Zoologico dell'Università di Firenze ["La Specola"] (MZUF), Museo ed Istituto di Zoologia sistematica della Università, Torino (MZUT), Naturhistorisches Museum, Wien (NMW), and the Forschungsinstitut und Naturmuseum Senckenberg, Frankfurt am Main (SMF).

The comparative sample of 47 Arabian *Platyceps rhodorachis* auct. (Appendix) is made up of specimens borrowed from four of the above mentioned institutions (BMNH, FMNH, MZUT, NMW) as well as the California Academy of Sciences (CAS) and the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle, Genève (MHNG). LIVM stands for the Liverpool Museum (Department of Zoology).

Morphological terms and measurements are defined in Schätti (1988) and Schätti & McCarthy (2004). Numbers in parenthesis indicate intraspecific variation. The scale formulae give the dorsal scale row (dsr) counts at the 15th ventral, midbody (msr), and five ventrals prior to the vent. The reduction pattern is expressed in terms of ventrals and as a percentage of their total number (%ven), based on the average of the right and left side. Maxillary teeth were usually examined on the right bone. The length of the hemipenis *in situ* and the insertion of the *M. retractor penis magnus* are given in absolute numbers of subcaudals and as a percentage thereof (%sub).

The synonymy lists references presenting new material and other relevant information, accession numbers of specimens examined by the author (usually cited at their first mention), and material studied by other herpetologists (in brackets). To be consistent with, for instance, Lanza (1981) and Largen & Rasmussen (1993), most coordinates and the spelling of place names are theirs; other coordinates are from the Gazetteers of the United States Board on Geographic Names (Ethiopia, Somalia) and the GEONET database (http://earth-info.nima.mil) or from collector's notes (MZUF 2599).

RESULTS

Platyceps rhodorachis subniger (Boettger, 1893) – Boettger's racer

?*Z.[amenis] florulentus*. - Parenti & Picaglia, 1886: 69 ("Coste del Mar Rosso" [not examined]).

Zamenis ladacensis var. *subnigra* Boettger, 1893a: 118 - "Ogadeen, Somaliland" (SMF 62595, subad. ♂, not examined).

Zamenis ladacensis Aud. [sic] var. *subnigra*. - Boettger, 1893b: 132 (checklist: "Somaliland").

Zamenis rhodorhachis [sic]. - Boulenger, 1896a: 553 ("Assab" [Aseb]: MSNG 30554, see footnote 2); Boulenger, 1896b: 623 ("Zaila" [Zeila]: BMNH 95.11.27.12, see footnote 2).

Zamenis rhodorhachus [sic]. - Meek & Elliot, 1897: 179 ("South of Toyo Plain": FMNH 374).

Zamenis rhodorhachis [sic]. - Boulenger, 1901: 49 (Biji: BMNH 1900.11.28.5); Calabresi, 1927: 53 (fide Boettger, 1893a; Boulanger, 1901).

Zamenis rhodorhachis [sic] *ladacensis* Anderson, 1871. - Scortecci, 1928: 299 ("Isole presso Massaua" [Mesewa, Shaykh Sayd Island (?)], "Isole Daalac" [Dahlak Al-Kabir]: MSNM 1885-86); Vinciguerra, 1931: 101 ("Gaarre" [Gaare, 13°13'N 42°07'E, approx. 150 m a.s.l.]).

Coluber rhodorhachis [sic]. - Parker, 1932: [337] 362 ("near Dagah Shabell" [♂♀, juv., incl. 1931.8.1.172 and 174]: BMNH 1931.8.1.173).

Coluber rhodorachis. - Loveridge, 1936: 27 (see Meek & Elliot, 1897).

Coluber rhodorhachis subnigra [sic]. - Parker, 1949: [28] 30, Figs 1-4 (9°57'-11°25'N 42°40'-45°07'E: incl. BMNH 1949.2.1.49-51, 1949.2.2.61) 1).

Coluber rhodorachis subniger. - Lanza, 1963: [388] 390, Fig. 5 [map] ("Abal Uen", Bosaso, Candala, "Carim" [Carin], Eil, "Galcaio" [Galka'yo], "Ghed Med Med": MSNM 1241, 2140, 2142-43; MZUF 918, 2599, 2600).

Coluber rhodorhachis subnigra [sic]. - Gans *et al.*, 1965: 61 (Candala [MCZ 71862]).

Coluber rhodorhachis [sic] *subniger*. - Lanza, 1983: 223 ("north Ethiopia; Somalia" [northern Somalia and Mudug Province]).

Coluber rhodorachis [*subniger*]. - Schätti, 1989: 928 (Dikhil: MZUF 36364); Largen & Rasmussen, 1993: [334] 335 [412], Fig. 1 [Dahlak Al-Kabir], map 13 ("near Berbera", Bulhar, Hargeisa, "SW shore of Dahlac Island": BMNH 1905.10.30.120-121, 1911.5.22.2-4, 1954.1.12.81, 1973.3212, see footnote 1); Largen, 1997: 89 ("Difrein Island" [Difnein, Dahlak archipelago, LIVM 1994.77] and "eastern Ethiopia", see Morphology and Distribution).

Platyceps rhodorachis. - Schätti, 2001: 140 [148] (Dahlak archipelago [review]).

Coluber rhodorachis subniger. - Ineich, 2003 ("Djibouti" [five MNHN specimens], La Hadge ["près de Djibouti", MNHN 1973.422], Maskali ["11°42,85'N - 43°09,46'E", MNHN 1999.6576] and Musha Island [11°42'59"N 43°12'22"E, MNHN 1981.477], Randa [11°50'49"N 42°39'38"E, MNHN 9599-9601], Gulf of Tadjura area ["environs du Golfe"]: incl. BMNH 1971.1477, MNHN 1960.116-119).

Platyceps rhodorachis subniger. - Schätti & Ineich, 2004: 685 [687] (comb. n.).

Material examined (Specimens marked with an asterisk were used for the calculation of cephalic indices; a † denotes an adult [MZUF 6697, damaged] and two juveniles without data; ventral counts are missing in four damaged specimens, i.e., MNHN 1960.116, MSNM 2143, MZUF 6698, and MZUT 650). DJIBOUTI: BMNH 1971.1477 ("Djibouti" [11°36'N 43°09'E], ♀); MNHN 1960.116-119 (vic. Tadjura [11°47'N 42°53'E], ♂♂♀♀), *2001.649 and (*)2001.652-53 (Arta, 11°31'N 42°51'E, approx. 700 m a.s.l., ♀♀♂); MZUF 36364 (Dikhil, 11°07'N 42°22'E, ♀). ERITREA: BMNH 1973.3212 (Dahlak Al-Kabir, 15°35'N 40°15'E, ♀); MSNG *30554 (Aseb, 13°01'N 42°44'E, ♀, see footnote 2); MSNM †1885 ("Isole presso Massaua"

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1) Parker's (1949) material (BMNH 1949.2.1.49-55, 1949.2.2.61, and 1949.1.3.47) is reported from the Zeila and Berbera region, i.e., *11°25'N 43°15'E, 0-150 feet a.s.l. (5 specimens), *10°35'N 42°40'E, 2'500-3'000 ft. (1949.2.1.52-53), 10°45'N 43°E, 3'000 ft. (1949.2.1.55), and 9°57'N 45°07'E, 4'800 ft. (1949.1.3.47). The file register in the BMNH gives all specimens as from «Somaliland» and lists, for instance, 1949.2.1.49-51 (3 ♀♀) from 11°25'N 45°15'E, 1949.2.1.55 as a female (♂ according to Parker, 1949) from *10°25'N 43°15'E, and 1949.1.3.47 from «Tidah Yehi, 4'040 ft.» at *9°55'N 45°07'E (see also Material examined). Coordinates marked with an asterisk were used for the preparation of the map (Fig. 1); the collecting site at 10°35'N 42°40'E is shown on Ethiopian territory in Largen & Rasmussen (1993: map 13).

[Shaykh Sayd Island (?): 15°35'N 39°29'E], juv.), †1886 (Dahlak Al-Kabir, juv. ♂); MZUT 650 (Aseb, ♂); NMW 36146 (Harat, Dahlak archipelago, 16°06'N 39°27'E, subad.). SOMALIA: BMNH 95.11.27.12 (Zeila, 11°21'N 43°30'E, juv., see footnote 2), 1900.11.28.5 (Biji, 10°11'N 44°06'E, ♂), 1905.10.30.120-121 ("near Berbera", ca. 10°25'N 45°02'E, ♀, juv.), 1911.5.22.2-4 (Bulhar, 10°23'N 44°25'E, ♀♀), 1931.8.1.173 ("5 mls. S. Dagah Shabell [D. Shabel, 10°09'N 43°13'E], 500 m", ♀), 1949.2.1.49-51 and 1949.2.2.61 (11°25'N 43°15'E, see footnote 1, ♀♀, ♂), 1954.1.12.81 (Hargeisa, 9°33'N 44°04'E, ♂), 1956.1.3.15 (Al-Medu [Al-Mado Mts., "5000', 100 mls. E Erigava" (Erigavo)], ca. 11°00'N 48°30'E, ♂); FMNH 374 ("South of Toyo Plain", ca. 9°15'N 45°00'E, subad. ♀); MSNM 1241 (Bosaso [Bender Cassim], 11°17'N 49°11'E, ♂), 2140 (Galka'yo, 6°46'N 47°25'E, ♀), 2142 (Candala [Qandala], 11°23'N 49°53'E, ♂), 2143 (Carin [Karin], 10°59'N 49°13'E, ♀); MZUF *918 (Eil, 7°58'N 49°48'E, ♂), 2599 ("Ghed Med Med", ca. 11°11'N 49°45'E, ♀), *2600 ("Abal Uen" [Abal Uein Mts.], 11°17'N 49°40'E, ♂), *6679-6706 [†6697, ♀] (Galgalo [Galgala], 11°00'N 49°03'E, 8 ♂♂, 20 ♀♀; all with head measurements).

MORPHOLOGY

Rostral 1.81-2.11 times broader than high. Internasals shorter (or much shorter) than prefrontals. Frontal 1.28-1.59 times longer than broad, 1.18-1.67 times longer than internasals and prefrontals, 0.87-1.07 times as long as parietals. Posterior border of parietals straight, rounded (convex), or forming an obtuse (concave) angle; indented at the median suture or not; lateral border distinctly constricted above the second row of temporals in BMNH 1973.3212. Head 2.21-2.51 times longer than broad.

Distance from the nostril to the eye 0.83-0.98 times the length of the internasals and prefrontals. Loreal longer, or much longer, than high; below touching third and posterior portion of second supralabial. Preocular single and usually in contact with frontal except in MZUF 6679 (left), 6689, and 6700; the mention of two preoculars (Gans *et al.*, 1965) probably includes the anterior subocular. The latter single except on left side of MZUF 918 (absent); fused on right side with fifth supralabial in MZUF 6701. Nine supralabials (eighth and ninth virtually fused in MZUF 6695), fifth and sixth in contact with eye, last three being larger. Two postoculars; upper larger, coalesced with supraocular on left side in BMNH 1973.3212. Posterior subocular absent. Two anterior (lower larger) and usually three posterior temporals (two in MZUF 6705, and on one side of BMNH 1971.1477, MSNM 2140, MZUF 6699, 6700, and 6702); upper second temporal on left side of MZUF 6685 elongate, extending along lateral edge of parietal to its posterior border.

Ten sublabials, nine on right side of MZUF 6706, eleven in MNHN 2001.652 (see also Gans *et al.*, 1965); the four anterior in contact with first inframaxillary, sixth largest. Anterior pair of chin shields shorter and broader than posterior; the latter separated in front by two rows of scales (rarely one) and usually four to five (three) rows behind. Gulars in four (three) oblique rows between the posterior chin shields and the first ventral.

Ventrals in specimens examined 208-228 (♂♂ 208-219, ♀♀ 210-225, 228 in BMNH 95.11.27.12); anal scute divided; 112-132 (♂♂ 112 in BMNH 1900.11.28.5

and 118-129, ♀♀ 113-132) paired subcaudals (see below); sum of ventrals and subcaudals 326-355 (♂♂ 329-344 and 326 in BMNH 1900.11.28.5, ♀♀ 333-355) [2].

Ventral data for Eritrea populations are scarce (see Material examined and footnote 2); two females (BMNH 1973.3212, MSNG 30554) have 220-225. NMW 36146, a subadult from Harat (Dahlak archipelago), has 218 ventrals; its low number of subcaudals (111) may be due to an incomplete tail. According to Vinciguerra (1931), five unsexed specimens from Gaare possess 219-225 ventrals, and up to 127 subcaudals. Compared to this and the taxon in general, the fragmented skin of LIVM 1994.77 from Difnein (16°37'N 39°20'E) with "ca. 208" ventrals (Malcolm J. Largen *in litt.*) has few scales; populations from Difnein and probably other islands in the Dahlak archipelago require further investigation.

Dorsals with paired apical pits, in 19-19-13 rows except in MZUF 6690 and 6698 which have 11 dsr in front of the vent (see remark in Material section) and NMW 36146 with 13 dsr on the posterior part of the body but 15 prior to the anal scute (no detailed data ascertained). Parker's (1949: 28) key entry ("Scales at mid-body in 17-19 rows") refers to *Platyceps brevis* (Boulenger, 1895).

In males, the first and second posterior reduction occur between ventrals 122 and 133 (58-61%ven) and 124-135 (59-64%ven), respectively; the third (last) reduction is situated from 140-163 (66-75%ven) and at ventral 172 (right) and 173 (left) in MNHN 2001.653 (82%). MZUF 6690 (♂, 215 ventrals) with a fourth reduction of dsr involving rows 3+4 at ventrals 198 and 202 (93%). In females, the values are 124-134 (57-61%ven) and 138 in MSNM 2140 (224 ventrals: 62%), 125-139 (58-63%ven), and 142-168 (66-77%ven) (180/179 in MSNM 2140: 80%), respectively. In both sexes, the sequence of the first and second dsr reduction is variable, viz., lateral (usually rows 3-5, 2-4 in MZUF 6694) or paravertebral (rows 7-9, 6-8 in MSNM 2140); the third (last) fusion usually involves rows 6+7, sometimes row 8 (5+6 in MZUF 6692).

Longest male (MZUF 6689) approximately 990 mm (ca. 750 + 240 mm); females with a snout-vent length of ca. 900 mm (BMNH 1973.3212, tail incomplete) and ca. 1000 mm (ca. 720 + 280 mm) total length in MZUF 6696. Tail/body ratio in adults 0.37-0.43 for both sexes except MSNG 30554 (♀, 0.35).

Head of holotype brownish grey above; nape black with irregular light greyish or bluish dots, approximately one dorsal scale large, extending along first quarter of trunk; remainder of body completely black. Head and fore-body yellowish white below, ventrals gradually provided with steel grey lateral edges ("mehr und mehr mit bleigrauen Rändern versehen") and obscure whitish dots on second quarter, dark with a vibrant slaty lustre ("lebhaftem Stahlglanz") posteriorly including underside of tail (Boettger, 1893a).

Vinciguerra (1931) mentioned four *Platyceps rhodorachis subniger* from Eritrea which are uniformly leaden ("grigio-plumbeo") above; one specimen from the same area (vicinity of Gaare) exhibits densly packed ("molto ravvicinate") oblique transverse bands. Largen & Rasmussen (1993: fig. 1) illustrated an adult female from Dahlak Al-Kabir (BMNH 1973.3212) with dorsal markings slightly narrower than the light interspaces and arranged in alternating cross-bars or transverse bands fading on the posterior portion of the trunk.

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[2] Boulenger (1896a) notified 215 ventrals and 122 subcaudals for MSNG 30554 (leg. V. Ragazzi 1888) instead of 225 and 113, respectively (verified by Giuliano Doria *in litt.*). Boulenger's (1896b) ventral count (229) for a juvenile (probably a female) from Zeila (BMNH 95.11.27.12) includes a preventral, and the specimen has 127 (instead of 129) subcaudals.

Supraocular and frontal region usually darkened except along their borders. Parietal often bearing an x-shaped marking, anterior lateral extensions confluent with a lateral stripe running to the anterior temporals. Sometimes with a short streak from the posterior edge of the parietals to the first nuchal band (e.g., Galgalo). Dorsal colour pattern of specimens examined roughly concurring with BMNH 1973.3212 (see above) but transverse bands often oblique, broken up into a median and a ventrolateral series or, in the case of large individuals from Somalia, more or less uniform; with a distinct dark longitudinal stripe on dorsal scales in, for instance, BMNH 1911.5.22. 2-4. Chin and belly ivory to yellowish; lateral edges of ventrals usually encroached by dorsal markings.

Maxillary normally with 15-16 teeth (18 specimens with 15, 29 with 16), 14 in MSNM 2140, and 17 in BMNH 1911.5.22.1; anterior series subisodont, diastema distinct, posterior two teeth only slightly enlarged, last offset laterad. Palatine with 8-9 teeth.

Hemipenis subcylindrical and spinose, *sulcus spermaticus* simple. Apex *in situ* at subcaudals 9-12 (8-9%sub); insertion of *M. retractor penis magnus* at subcaudals 26-28 (21-24%sub).

Distribution and Ecology

Platyceps rhodorachis subniger is known from coastal Eritrea (Aseb [Assab], Gaare, Mesewa [Massawa]), Dahlak Al-Kabir, Harat and possibly further islands of the Dahlak archipelago, Djibouti including the islets of Maskali (11°42'53"N 43°09'30"E) and Musha (11°42'59"N 43°12'22"E), and Somalia to as far south as Mudug Province (Galka'yo) in central Somalia (Fig. 1). The taxon is recorded from sea level to approximately 1'500 m (see footnote 1) in the Hargeisa Mountains roughly 50 km south of Berbera.

Except for the holotype from "Ogadeen, Somaliland" (Boettger, 1893a), supposedly in Ethiopia (e.g., Mertens, 1967), there are no specimens known from this country (see Fig. 1 and footnote 1). However, Boettger's racer certainly has a larger distribution in the Ethiopian border region with Djibouti and Somalia than documented on the map.

Parker (1949) noted that *Platyceps rhodorachis subniger* "was collected by Col. Taylor throughout the dry season (November to March) and during the early part of the 'Ju' rains. It was found only in stony places in arid localities with little vegetation." This taxon "is clearly associated with desert and semi-desert environments" (Largen & Rasmussen, 1993). However, Ineich (2003) described the habitat in Djibouti as cliffs and rocky areas ("Falaises et zones rocheuses") as well as mangroves.

Food items include unidentified lizards (e.g., MNHN 1960.116, MSNM 1241) and the frog *Tomopterna* cf. *cryptotis* (Boulenger) (MNHN 9599). MNHN 1981.477 from Musha Island returned from the sea ("sortait de la mer", Ineich, 2003). A pregnant female (MZUF 6695) had three eggs in the oviduct.

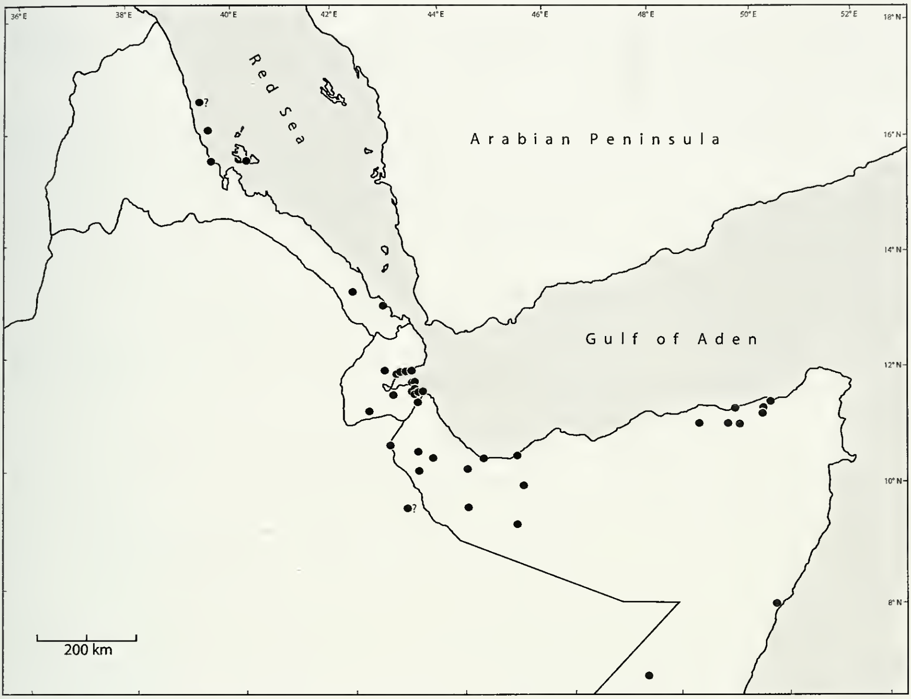

FIG. 1

Known distribution of *Platyceps rhodorachis subniger* based on the examined material and literature records (see footnote 1). Question marks denote the vague type locality ("Ogaden"), arbitrarily placed at 9°30'N 43°00'E, and Difnein Island, northern Dahlak archipelago (see Morphology).

DISCUSSION

Zamenis ladacensis var. *subnigra* Boettger was described on the basis of a single specimen with vague origin (see above). Boulenger (1896a, 1901) did not confer subspecific rank to this taxon, and Scortecci (1928) and Vinciguerra (1931) assigned populations from Eritrea to *Z. rhodorhachis* [sic] *ladacensis* Anderson [3].

Parker (1949) revalidated Boettger's racer (as *Coluber rhodorhachis subnigra*) for East African *Platyceps rhodorachis* auct. on the basis of "a lower number of ventral and subcaudal scales and by a head in which the prefrontal region is relatively longer in relation to the frontal" vis-à-vis populations usually referred to Jan's cliff racer from northern Africa (*P. saharicus*) and the Arabian Peninsula to the Himalayas. This view, i.e., the use of trinominals for populations from Eritrea to the Horn of Africa, was generally accepted by later herpetologists (see synonymy).

Stressing the alleged absence of *Platyceps rhodorachis* auct. from Sudan (see Schätti & McCarthy, 2004 and below), Largen & Rasmussen (1993) thought it "appropriate to recognise the isolated population occupying eastern Ethiopia and northern Somalia, which has ventral and subcaudal counts that are, on average, rather lower than in the typical form, as subspecifically distinct (Parker, 1949)." Lanza (1990: 453) noted that the East African "subspecies [is] poorly differentiated from that inhabiting N Africa and Arabia."

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[3] Boulenger (1892, 1893) ranked *Zamenis ladacensis* Anderson, 1871 as a junior synonym of *Z. rhodorachis* Jan, 1863.

Anderson (1901) examined a *Platyceps rhodorachis* auct. (BMNH 99.12.13.86) from "Abyan country" in SW Yemen that was "of a uniform greyish-blue or slate-colour" anteriorly and "purplish brown" on the latter third of the trunk and the upper surface of the tail, produced by "a narrow interrupted blackish mesial line" on the neck, "becoming more marked as it is traces backwards, and so broad at the anterior fourth as to cover the greater part of the back, ultimately extending over the whole of the dorsal surface". Anderson (1901) concluded "that the type of coloration first indicated by Boettger may be said to be common to individuals of Z. *rhodorhachis* [sic] from both sides of the Red Sea in the latitude of Aden." However, the semimelanistic ("*subniger*") colour pattern exhibited by the holotype of Boettger's racer (see Morphology) appears to be uncommon in Africa.

Platyceps rhodorachis subniger is exceptional among *Platyceps* spp., and in particular taxa of the *P. rhodorachis* group (*afarensis, rhodorachis, saharicus*, and sp. *incertae sedis* sensu Schätti & McCarthy, 2004), in the homogeneity of its scale characters (e.g., preocular and anterior subocular virtually always single, nine supralabials, usually three posterior temporals, mostly 19-19-13 dsr) including low variability of ventrals and subcaudals as well as the position of dsr reductions.

Platyceps afarensis from Djibouti, only known from the type series (two specimens), has 21 msr and 19 maxillary teeth. This species and *P. saharicus* (south to Nubia, Sudan) have, for instance, much higher ventral counts and more subcaudals than Boettger's racer (Schätti & Ineich, 2004; Schätti & McCarthy, 2004).

Platyceps rhodorachis subniger is considered morphologically closest to *P. rhodorachis* auct. from SW Arabia (see Appendix) with, for instance, 215-229 ventrals, 112-142 subcaudals, and 14-16 maxillary teeth. The phylogenetic relationships and systematic status of the latter require a more detailed analysis, but possible conspecificity with NE African populations is consistent with the Afro-Arabian ranges of, for instance, the semaphore gecko *Pristurus rupestris* Blanford (north to Jordan and the Gulf area), the lacertid *Mesalina martini* (Boulenger) from the Red Sea coast of Sudan to Somalia and the southern Yemen littoral, or the skink *Trachylepis brevicollis* (Wiegmann) from eastern Africa and the Arabian Peninsula.

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APPENDIX. Comparative sample of Arabian *Platyceps rhodorachis* auct. SAUDI ARABIA: BMNH 1929.8.1.3 (♂), 1938.2.1.71 (♂), and 1951.1.1.53 (Jiddah, ♀); CAS 135250 (♂), 139516-17 (♂♀), and 139533 (Jiddah, ♀). YEMEN: BMNH 97.3.11.110 ("Hadramawt", ♂), BMNH 99.12.13.86 ("Abian County", ♂), BMNH 1903.1.28.8 (Khawbar, ♂), BMNH 1903.3.6.18 ("Schaf Ravine", ♀), BMNH 1903.3.6.50 and 1903.6.26.32 (Khawbar, ♂♂), BMNH 1962.939-40 (♀♀), 1962.942-43 (♂♂), 1962.947 (♀), and 1962.950 ("Aden Protectorate", ♀), BMNH 1962.952 (♀), 1962.954 (♀), and 1962.959 (Al-Mukalla, ♂), BMNH 1962.963-64 (Jawl Bahawa, ♂♀); FMNH 18218 (Aden, ♀), FMNH 66145 (Al-Hudaydah, ♂); MHNG 2456.65 (Sana'a – Dhamar rd., ♂), MHNG 2456.67 (Jabal Umm Layla, ♂); MZUF 25194 (Sana'a, ♂); MZUT 628 ("Hadramawt", ♀); NMW 15169 (Hayt Al-Lim, ♀), NMW 25444.1-2 (Qishn, ♀♂). OMAN (Dhofar): BMNH 1931.7.16.59-62 and 1931.7.16.64-67 ("Zara Mts." [Jabal Qara], 3♂♂, 5♀♀), BMNH 1971.1337-38 (♂♀) and 1977.1189 (Salalah, ♂), BMNH 1976.1484 (Wadi Sarfait, Jabal Qamr, ♂); MHNG 2443.38-39 (Salalah, ♂♀).